



**LIGHT COMBAT AIRCRAFT TEJAS
MK1A'S FIRST FLIGHT SUCCESSFUL**
The HAL said the first LA 5053 aircraft of the Tejas Mk1A series took to the skies successfully from its facility in Bengaluru on Thursday

'SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE HAS BEEN ACHIEVED'
"HAL achieved this significant production milestone with concurrent design & development amid major supply chain challenges in the global geopolitical environment subsequent to the contract signature in February 2021," said C B Ananthakrishnan, chairman and managing director of the company. The aircraft was piloted by Group Captain K K Venugopal (Retd)

INDIAN AIR FORCE TO INDUCT THE AIRCRAFT
■ The Tejas Mk1A will have an advanced electronic RADAR, warfare, communication systems and additional combat capability
■ The country can look forward to an early induction of the Tejas Mk1A by the IAF and more numbers through the three lines of production established at HAL, it said in a statement | P5

18 MINS
WAS THE FLYING TIME OF
TEJAS MK1A'S FIRST FLIGHT

DELHI COURT EXTENDS CHIEF MINISTER'S ED REMAND TILL ALL FOOLS' DAY

Kejri argues his case, sees plot to crush party

UJJWAL JALALI @ New Delhi

A Delhi court on Thursday saw its arrested chief minister himself arguing his case in the liquor policy scam. "I was named by four witnesses in the excise policy case. Are four statements enough to arrest a sitting CM?" he asked.

The court extended the custody of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with the Enforcement Directorate (ED) by four more days till April 1 in the scam.

The Rouse Avenue Court saw heated arguments between Kejriwal and ED lawyers during the hearing. "Where is the ₹100 crore liquor scam money the ED keeps harping on?" Kejriwal asked, adding that the entire liquor policy case is a political conspiracy to crush his Aam Aadmi Party.

During the previous hearing, the probe agency had sought to establish Kejriwal's role in the formulation of the excise policy by citing a statement of C Arvind, the then Secretary of former Deputy CM Manish Sisodia. Arvind told the ED that he was handed a draft report of a Group of Ministers on the excise policy by Sisodia at Kejriwal's residence where

former minister Satyendra Jain was also present.

Referring to this allegation, Kejriwal said because of his position, several ministers come to his residence and even exchange documents. "Is this statement sufficient to arrest a sitting CM?" he questioned.

On the statement of another accused-turned-approver Raghav Magunta to the ED, the CM said Magunta's father gave six statements to the probe agency but did not say anything about Kejriwal. Magunta is the son of Buchi Babu, chartered accountant of BRS leader K Kavitha, who too is under arrest in the same case. The AAP chief argued that people are being turned approver and forced to change their statements. The ED investigations began in August 2022. The 2021-22 Delhi excise policy was later scrapped.

Not opposing the ED's demand for further custody, Kejriwal pointed out that approver Sarath Chandra Reddy donated ₹55 crore to the BJP just after his arrest. "I have the evidence. Money trail is established. He donated ₹55 crore to BJP after being arrested," Kejriwal said. The court noted his point and assured it will be investigated.

The actual excise policy scam started after the ED investigation and not when the policy was made
Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi chief minister



Arvind Kejriwal comes out of a Delhi court after his production in the excise policy scam on Thursday | P11

Comments by US State Dept unwarranted: foreign office

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

INDIA on Thursday described the US State Department's recent comments on the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as unwarranted - its second riposte in response to two statements.

Apart from weighing in on Kejriwal, the State Department also commented on the freezing of Congress funds.

"As you are aware, on Wednesday, India had lodged its strong objection and protest with the senior official from the US Embassy with regard to the comments made by the US State Department. The recent remarks by the State Department are unwarranted. Any such external imputation on our electoral and legal processes is completely unacceptable," said Ministry of External Affairs spokesman Randhir Jaiswal.

The MEA said in India, legal processes are driven only by the rule of law. "Anyone who has similar ethos, especially fellow democracies, should have no difficulty in appreciating this fact. India is proud of its independent and robust democratic institutions. We are committed to protect them from any form of undue external influences," Jaiswal added.

India also reiterated that mutual respect and understanding form the foundation of international relations and states are expected to be respectful of the sovereignty and internal affairs of others.

CUSTODY EXTENSION

"...there appears to be sufficient reasons to permit further custodial interrogation, particularly keeping in view the submissions that he (Kejriwal) is required to be confronted with the material collected and statements recorded so far," special judge Kaveri Baweja said

In first tango, RIL picks up 26% stake in an Adani arm

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

IN a first, rival billionaires Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani have joined hands for a business deal as Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) acquired a 26% stake in Mahan Energen Ltd (MEL), a wholly owned subsidiary of Adani Power Ltd.

The deal will give RIL 500 MW of electricity from MEL's Madhya Pradesh-based power plants for captive use. "One unit of 600 MW capacity of MEL's Mahan thermal power plant, out of its aggregate operating and upcoming capacity of 2,800 MW, will be designated as the Captive Unit for this purpose," Adani Power said in an exchange filing. It added that RIL will pick up 5 crore shares with

Stake transfer to meet captive use norms

If a power generating unit has to be considered a captive generating plant, the captive user must hold not less than 26% of the ownership in the captive generating company. Also, 51% of the power generated must be used by the owners for their own consumption

a face value of ₹10 (₹50 crore).

"The proposed investment by the Company is in compliance with the provisions of the Electricity Rules, 2005, in terms of which the Company, as a captive user, is required to own 26% proportionate ownership in one unit of MEL of 600 MW capacity, with RIL being the captive user of 500 MW generation capacity," said RIL in its exchange filing.

Ambani's interests span oil and gas to retail and telecom while Adani's focus is on infrastructure spanning sea ports to

airports, coal and mining. Though considered business rivals, the two Gujarat industrialists have rarely crossed each other's path except in the clean energy business, where the two have announced multi-billion investments.

Adani aspires to be the world's largest renewable energy producer by 2030, while Reliance is building four gigafactories in Jamnagar — one each for solar panels, batteries, green hydrogen, and fuel cells. Adani is also building three gigafactories for manufacturing solar modules, wind turbines, and hydrogen electrolyzers.

EXPRESS READ

Gangster-politician Mukhtar Ansari dies

LUCKNOW: Jailed gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari died of cardiac arrest at a hospital in Banda in UP on Thursday. Ansari, 63, was a five-time MLA from Mau Sadar seat. He had over 60 criminal cases pending against him and was sentenced in eight cases.

WITH THIS ISSUE
CITY'S BEST WEEKEND GUIDE
INDULGE
40 PAGES, INCLUDING 24 OF INDULGE (TABLOID)

SIDDU TO CONSULT HIGH COMMAND

Cong yet to decide on Kolar candidate

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE CONGRESS is yet to announce its candidate for Kolar Lok Sabha constituency although five Congress legislators on Wednesday threatened to resign in protest against selecting Food and Civil Supplies Minister KH Muniyappa's son-in-law Chikkappaanna for the seat. On Thursday, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar held meetings with Congress leaders from Kolar district. However, they failed to convince them, sources said.

With this, the Congress party's campaign that was supposed to start from Kolar has been postponed.

Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar met the party leaders belonging to the former Assembly speaker Ramesh Kumar's faction. The sources said the leaders of the faction made it clear to the CM and DCM that they will not support any member of Muniyappa's family

for the Kolar seat.

The leaders reportedly told Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar that the candidate for Kolar should be selected after taking into consideration the suggestions of local Congress leaders. They appealed to the CM to name the party candidate soon. Siddaramaiah promised them that he will hold discussions with the party high command and get back to them.

The CM asked leaders from Kolar not to go to the media, which may embarrass the party high command. "Whatever decision the high command takes, we all should obey and work for the candidate's victory," Siddaramaiah told them. Meanwhile, Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar spoke to Muniyappa. But he is firm on his demand for the party ticket to his son-in-law. Muniyappa alleged that some leaders from Kolar district created unnecessary issues for the party. If the party selects his son-in-law for Kolar, he will ensure his victory, Muniyappa said. P6

MINISTER PRIYANK GETS THREAT LETTER

The Vidhana Soudha police have registered an FIR against an unknown person for sending a threat letter to Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister Priyank Kharge and his family members. Priyank told reporters here on Thursday that the letter was posted from Kalaburagi to his Bengaluru office address a few days ago | P4

Cafe blast case: NIA arrests key conspirator

BALA CHAUNAN @ Bengaluru

IN A MAJOR breakthrough in the Bengaluru cafe blast case, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday arrested a key conspirator, Muhammad Shareef, following raids in three states.

Shareef was reportedly picked up from Bengaluru and placed in custody as a co-conspirator after NIA teams cracked down at 18 locations, including 12 in Karnataka, five in Tamil Nadu and one in Uttar Pradesh, the NIA stated in a press release on Thursday.

The NIA took over the case on March 3. It had earlier identified the main accused, Musavir Shazeeb Hussain, who had carried out the blast. Hussain is a resident of Masjid Road, Thirthahalli, Shivamogga. He is also accused in other terror cases. He features in the wanted list of NIA.

The agency had also identified another conspirator, Abdul Matheen Taha, also from Shivamogga, who is wanted in other terror-related cases, and is on the run.

NIA officials raided the houses of the three accused and residential premises and shops of other suspects.

According to informed sources, the cafe blast case reportedly has linkages with the same module to which Mohd Shariq, the main accused in Mangaluru pressure cooker blast case in November 2022, belonged.

CONTINUED ON P5

DKS' brother Suresh files papers, declares assets worth ₹593 crore

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE ASSETS of sitting MP DK Suresh, brother of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, increased by 75% in the last five years. Suresh filed his nomination papers on Thursday to contest from Bengaluru Rural Lok Sabha constituency.

According to his affidavit filed before the Election Commission, Suresh has assets worth Rs 593 crore, which were worth Rs 338 crore in 2019. His liabilities have increased from Rs 51 crore to Rs 150 crore (188%).

Renowned cardiologist and former director of Sri Jayadeva Institute Of Cardiovascular Science and Research Dr CN



CM Siddaramaiah greets Congress candidate for BTU Rural DK Suresh in Ramanagara on Thursday | EXPRESS

Manjunath is contesting against Suresh on BJP ticket.

The MP's asset value increased due to appreciation of the value of his immovable assets such as residential and commercial buildings, and agricultural land (inherited) in Ramanagara and Bengaluru. The immovable assets alone are worth Rs 486 crore.

Suresh, who owned movable assets worth Rs 33 crore in 2019, now has such assets worth Rs 106 crore, a whopping 220% increase in five years.

Suresh has three cases against him for violation of COVID-19 protocol.

The MP and his brother organised a padayatra seeking implementation of the Meke-datu reservoir project two years ago. P6

RURAL JOBS SCHEME

Peanuts as wage hike draw barbs in poll season

JITENDRA CHOUBEY @ New Delhi

A paltry annual hike in daily wages under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) for unskilled workers was jeered at by the Opposition, with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi promising to jack it up to ₹400 a day.

Each state has a different daily wage rate under the scheme. Haryana was at the top of the pecking order at ₹374 after the revision this year while in Uttar Pradesh it was just ₹237. In gross terms, states like UP and Assam witnessed an increase of just ₹7 as compared to last year while the wage rise in

MGNREGA WAGES FOR UNSKILLED MANUAL WORKERS

REVISED WAGES IN 2024			CHANGE IN %				
WAGES IN 2023							
Andhra Pradesh	272	300	10.2%	Kerala	333	346	3.9%
Assam	238	249	2.9%	Madhya Pradesh	221	243	9.9%
Bihar	228	245	7.4%	Maharashtra	273	297	8.7%
Chhattisgarh	221	243	9.9%	Odisha	237	254	7.1%
Gujarat	256	280	9.3%	Punjab	303	322	6.2%
Goa	322	356	10.5%	Rajasthan	255	266	4.3%
Haryana	357	374	4.7%	Tamil Nadu	294	319	8.5%
J&K	244	259	6.1%	Telangana	272	300	10.2%
Jharkhand	228	245	7.4%	Uttar Pradesh	230	237	3%
Karnataka	316	349	10.4%	Uttarakhand	230	237	3%
				West Bengal	237	250	5.4%
				Wages in rupees & States			

Goa was ₹28. The annual revision by the Centre is meant to mitigate inflation. A govern-

Wages in rupees, States	2023	2024	% Change
Kerala	333	346	3.9%
Madhya Pradesh	221	243	9.9%
Maharashtra	273	297	8.7%
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Punjab	303	322	6.2%
Rajasthan	255	266	4.3%
Tamil Nadu	294	319	8.5%
Telangana	272	300	10.2%
Uttar Pradesh	230	237	3%
Uttarakhand	230	237	3%
West Bengal	237	250	5.4%

ment official termed the revision a routine exercise. Taking a dig, Rahul sarcasti-

cally said, "Congratulations to MGNREGA workers! The PM has increased your salary by ₹7. Now he might ask you, 'What will you do with such a huge amount of money?'" Trinamool leader Saket Gokhale sharply criticised the inadequate increase of wages, especially in West Bengal. "Shameful & shocking that in today's wage revision announced for MGNREGA, Modi Govt has increased wages for workers in Bengal by only 5%," Gokhale posted on X.

Goa topped the chart with a hike of 10.56%, while in Karnataka it was 10.4%, MP and Chhattisgarh 9.9%, Gujarat 9.3% and Bihar 7.4%.

Youth dies after his friend inserts air compressor hose into rectum 'for fun'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

A 24-YEAR-OLD youth working with an event management company died after his friend inserted an air compressor hose into his rectum "for fun" at a car service station in the city.

The accused put the hose pipe of the running machine into the victim's rectum who had gone to the station to wash his friend's bike. It is said that the high pressure air that entered the victim's stomach severely damaged his intestine and other organs. The victim, who fell unconscious, was immediately rushed to a nearby hospi-

tal. The incident happened on Monday and the victim died on Wednesday. Based on a complaint by his sister, Sampige-halli police registered a case and arrested the accused.

The victim has been identified as R Yogesh of Ashwath Nagar near Sampige-halli and the accused as Murali, an employee of CNS Car Spa in Thanisandra. Yogesh used to frequently meet Murali and other friends at the service station.

Yogesh had taken leave from his company to make preparations for his sister's wedding in April — Police Officer

On Monday around 7 pm, he went to the station to wash his friend's bike. When the victim, who was wearing shorts, was standing near the bike, the accused allegedly inserted the compressor hose into his rectum. When Yogesh did not return home, his sister Jayashree called him and she was informed that he was in hospital. When Jayashree rushed to the hospital, Yogesh told her what had happened to him.

On Tuesday morning, he developed breathlessness. He was immediately shifted to another hospital where he died around 9.30 am the next day.